DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 108 207 CS 202 090

AUTHOR Silverman, N. Paul
TITLE CATS (Center for Alternative Teaching Strategies)--Developing the Humane Society.
PUB DATE Apr 75
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Secondary School English Conference of the National Council of Teachers of English (3rd, Kansas City, Missouri, April 18-20, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Educational Programs; Elementary Education; English Curriculum; Humanistic Education; *Inservice Programs; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Interdisciplinary Approach; Language Arts; Program Content; *Program Descriptions; Social Studies
IDENTIFIERS Elementary Secondary Education Act Title III; ESEA Title III

ABSTRACT

Project CATS (Center for Alternative Teaching Strategies), a series of workshops which focused on process as a product in itself and the importance of affective education, is described in this paper. The target population was originally 70 fourth- through seventh-grade teachers of the Oak Park, Michigan, school district, that is, all language arts and social studies teachers at those levels. The year's program was structured into eight sections, each section having a particular theme which was presented four times to four different groups of teachers. Three full-day sessions and five half-day sessions were held during the year. Government monies paid for the released time for teacher attendance. Attendance at the first workshop was mandatory; all subsequent attendance was voluntary. The basic philosophy of CATS was to offer alternative strategies and action techniques that had been proven effective on a cross discipline and cross grade level. Each workshop is described and the accomplishments of the project are listed. (TS)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED108207

CATS - DEVELOPING THE HUMANE SOCIETY

N. PAUL SILVERMAN, Director, Title III, ESEA

Address Delivered to NCTE Secondary School English Teachers Conference April 18, 1975, Kansas City, Mo.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
N. Paul Silverman
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER.

Several years ago, I was asked to serve on the Lecture Alternatives committee of the Michigan Council of Teachers of English. At that time, I was a high school teacher of drama and general composition courses. I'm sure that I was no better or even less stimulating than the average teacher of English. I do admit that while I served my four year term in teaching junior high, on one evaluation, the principal was deeply concerned about "the great abundance of black rubber marks on the light colored tile" and he wasn't quite sure in my classes where "creativity ended and noise began." My classroom shook frequently, even behind closed doors, and my department chairman just as frequently inquired, "Why do you need this kind of aggravation?" referring, I suppose, to my unique assignments, my students' activities, and the principal's reactions.

It wasn't until I was transferred to the high school and subsequent advanced studies at Wayne State University, that I stumbled on the writings of James Moffett and discovered that I was part of a legitimate movement. What was happening in my classroom was drama. I was involved in teaching strategies that were alternatives to traditional lecture approaches. I "covered" the required curriculum, but, like the song, I did it my way. An alternative process is a more descriptive phrase. Eventually, it was the process that became more and more significant. Obviously, students

CS 202 090

felt that they weren't learning anything in my classes; they were having too much fun. They were involved -- but their traditional conditioning to the classroom mostly inhibited their understanding of what they were learning. There was interaction, a developing sense of community, and there was trust. These were experiential values, and whether or not they knew it, students were also acquiring cognition. They read more, they wrote more, they participated more. Thus, if my classroom techniques were successful, I welcomed the opportunity to share them with others and the Lecture Alternatives committee seemed the logical outlet.

My work in the committee brought me into contact with Tom McPhillips, who was then teaching in Detroit's Kennedy Elementary School. He and I conducted a series of activities in his fifth grade classes using the techniques I had developed in my junior and high school experiences. I believed that an effective educational process should have some validity at all levels of teaching and this alliance gave me an opportunity to check out the philosophy. Tom and I were a very effective team. While I was able to offer him a variety of strategies in role playing and improvisational drama, he taught me the importance of specific goals and objectives for these activities. To be cognizant of why you engage in an activity became as important as doing it. Ultimately, we published our experiences in an article, "The Hardy Boys' Magic Device" for the NCTE. By the completion of our project, we knew that our approach was valid. We began expansion of our original activities with a great assist from Dr. Greta B. Lipson working in values education.

Greta had developed an exciting motivational technique which Tom and I field tested at various school levels. Within a role playing framework, entire classes became involved in trials of Hansel and Gretel and the often maligned Mrs. Salem. The excitement of open inquiry, critical thinking, valuing generated by the Hansel and Gretel trials led us to create a series of formats based on folk tales which we called "Fairy Tales Revisited."

Drama, particularly the role playing aspects, stimulated us regarding in what we saw as an unique and highly effective tool for teaching. Additionally, we began to see the emergence of interdisciplinary values with culminating exercises for the formats during class use. And as our experience with fairy tale formats expanded, we were ready for a bolder and broader creative application of arts and humanities methodologies. The opportunity presented itself in Fall, 1973, when the Title III, ESEA application in Michigan addressed itself to projects emphasizing arts and humanities.

I don't know how many of you have ever had the opportunity to write a government proposal, but it is the pinochle of all writing experiences. Rather, it is like playing croquet with the Red Queen. The game is familiar, but the rules seem outrageous, and the greater your involvement, the less success you seem to achieve. When Greta Lipson and I sat down with Oak Park, Michigan, school officials in Fall of '73, we must have discovered the right keys, for the right doors. Our application was selected along with 16 school districts in the state of Michigan to be awarded a Title III, ESEA grant.

CATS, (Center for Alternative Teaching Strategies), as we conceived it, was a project addressed to two major concerns -- process as product itself and the importance of affective education. Through our action research in the field, we were convinced that the techniques and strategies of arts and humanities were effective for interdisciplinary teaching. Art was the media. This was the uniqueness of our program. Newness emerged from the juxtaposition of an art process with the cognition of a different discipline. Thus, we envisioned and saw, dance as a technique for teaching math and science concepts, music for the exploration of reading and linguistics, puppets involved in the metric system, the possibilities were endless. More important, we began to realize that process, as we defined it, was cross discipline and cross age level. When the technique was valid, the sophistication of the audience determined the quality of the interaction in the subject explored.

After a weeklong summer workshop where district personnel and university presenters shaped a common philosophy, we were ready to inaugurate our program. CATS began its first workshop on September 25, 1974. Our target population was originally 70 fourth through seventh grade teachers of the Oak Park school district, i.e., all language arts and social studies teachers at those levels. However, the population shifted when physical education, science, math, and even a home economics teacher became involved.

The year's program was structured into eight sections, each section having a particular theme which was to be presented four times to a different group of teachers.

The Oak Park High School television studio was centrally located and thus ideal for the workshop area. Pre-semester discussions with principals of the six elementary and two middle schools determined which teachers would attend the individual sessions. Three full day sessions were scheduled for the year, and five half days. Government monies paid for the released time for teacher attendance. Attendance at the first workshop was mandatory; all subsequent attendance was voluntary.

Our opening series was a full day potpourri of the major arts techniques with presenters from music, art, dance, and drama. Wherever possible, we tried to enlist those presenters who were scheduled for service later in the school year. It was equally important that the local school authority cooperated with the university or college person. We were interested in establishing an intellectual as well as community rapport in the project. Even so, an inconsequential detail as serving coffee and baked goods during the breaks created positive feelings from our participants. "You care enough about us to feed us," remarked one teacher. Surprisingly, during the fifth series of workshops when Dr. Grace Kachaturoff incorporated bargaining of doughnuts in her simulating and gaming strategies and participants were refused coffee, we had a small rebellion and two teachers left in search of their morning's libation. Grace restructured her presentation for the next workshop.

Reactions to our introductory efforts were quite varied. "Fantastic," "Excellent!" "Best thing to hit the district" to "a total and complete waste of government monies . . . Show and tell for grown-ups!" Obviously, you can't win them

all. But what was significant was the fact that while some teachers remained skeptical about what we were doing, they continued to come to the workshops. And some transformed into believers.

It is important to stress the quality of our presenters. Each was selected because of his or her dedicated and dynamic approach to teaching. Greta and I had attended too many presentations where the program's structure was a series of philosophical vignettes often strung together with a certain sameness in content, style, and delivery. We selected individuals who "did their thing" effectively without philosophizing teachers into a stupor. Ann Zirulnik, Chairperson of Dance Education at Wayne State University, typlified our expert prototype or authority. At her insistence, during our summer workshop, Ann insisted that strategies presented could not be a series of gimmicks but had to have strong goals and objectives. Her movement activities involved teachers in unique problem solving and open inquiry situations. Working with such simple props as newspapers or picture postcards, Ann opened new vistas for teachers in stimulating writing experiences, and more important, in molding a sense of community and trust among the participants.

By the time Fred Attebury, Chairperson of Art Education at Wayne, began working, the program was in "high gear." Fred involved the teachers in media presentations constructing units on identity, environmental education, and math, while Don Nadel, coordinator of art in Oak Park Middle schools, challenged teachers to create and develop programs using paper bag and stick puppets.

We realized early that the material we presented at our CATS Workshop was only scratching the surface of a discipline. Our thrust was not to teach arts and humanities, but to utilize established techniques from these areas so that all teachers could be aware of the limitless ideas capable of incorporation within their own teaching styles. The basic philosophy of CATS was not to offer panaceas. Ours were alternative teaching strategies, action techniques that we knew worked on a cross discipline and cross grade level.

Thus, the total concept of CATS unfolded more completely with "Fairy Tales Revisited," the fourth series, because of its wide spectrum of appeal. During this workshop, the significance of process became more and more important to us. Greta's format was to establish a role playing situation. Let me describe how these sessions functioned. After recounting the plot structure of the "Pied Piper" to the group, Greta chose four participants to portray members of the Hamelin town council. She assigned each player a specific role which was not to be revealed to other workshop members. For example, the mayor was to ameliorate the anger of the crowd because of his upcoming election, the treasurer tried to conceal the fact that he had embezzled funds from the treasury, the town merchant and town doctor both had capitalized on profits made from the rat infestation. Once roles had been assigned, the balance of the audience assumed the roles of irate citizens who demanded from the council, "Why wasn't the Piper paid?"

What was so exciting to us was the development of a process which leaped down many roads. We never knew how or in what direction the inquiry would lead. We were truly working with

techniques of open inquiry, problem solving, critical thinking, and valuing. Most important, this central technique afforded audience interaction across the grades. As Gary Marx, Oak Park's Consultant for Valuing and Humanistic Education, pointed out to the teachers, it opened up the classroom. It created a safe atmosphere where students could venture opinion without fear of failure. The climate was warm and accepting.

Dr. Grace Kachaturoff of the University of Michigan-Dearborn extended this environment in her presentation. A national authority on simulation and gaming, Grace structured her activities so realistically that there was a ferment of attitudes and strong reactions. As in life, conflict was the rule rather than the exception. Like Ann Zirulnik, Grace was available and worked in the various schools demonstrating lessons with students.

When Larry Wolf, Oak Park's Music Director and CATS program coordinator, worked with Doris Richards from Wayne State University's music department, most teachers were sold fully on the interdisciplinary values of arts media for teaching other subjects. African rhythms became intertwined with math; sound was science. Music as an adjunct for the teaching of reading was the topic of one teacher's master essay. And Dr. Jane Romatowski, Language Arts professor from the University of Michigan-Dearborn, in tandem with Alvin Mayes, a math teacher, developed mathematical dance graphs, movement diamentes and other poetic forms, including a concept of "Chance-Dance!" Still to come was the closing workshop featuring Douglas Campbell's presentation on Creative Problem Solving.

Let me emphasize that all techniques presented to teachers were not new. But to many of the participants, often the insight and renewal of interest generated novel, exciting, and practical approaches as alternatives to lecture. We literally modeled behavior for teachers. They experienced the positive climate of their own simulated classrooms, and they left us asking for more.

With the staunch support of Superintendent, Dr. Sam Sniderman, and Deputy Superintendent, Dr. Clifford May, here was a school district where my creative colleagues were willing to venture beyond the questions at the end of the chapter for a great educational adventure.

After six months of working with teachers in a workshop setting and visiting them in their classrooms, I am convinced that our program has made a positive impact. From the early sessions when teachers stiffly accepted our action strategies to our more current programs, the high degree of voluntary participation indicates basic interest. CATS seems to have rooted as an inherent force in the Oak Park School District. Formal evaluation data has been positively significant. If I were to recount our accomplishments over this brief period of time, they would have to be these:

1. Instituting a "floating workshop" concept as an in-service model for professional growth.
2. Positing a model for a consortium between university personnel and district teachers as the major delivery system for inservice training.
3. Developing the effectiveness of arts and humanities as the media for alternative teaching strategies in a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach for the classroom.

4. Creating a program which addresses itself to teacher needs in terms of cognition as well as humanistic concerns. A program for teacher interaction which has enhanced positive teacher morale through practical "hands-on" activities.

5. Exploring and developing more effective use of the district's supportive services. Conserving and exploiting the district's natural resources in a time of "crunch."

The importance of these accomplishments are more significant when you read the following section of rationale from the working draft of "A Plan of Action for Arts Education in the State of Michigan," a position paper distributed by the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on the Arts in Michigan Education:

> Finally, comprehensive arts programs will also include, in often very different forms and to different degrees, provision for allowing the rich potential of the arts as tools in basic education to be used by teachers in other content areas. The art teacher will find ways to relate to social studies concepts, arts as a part of the resources he or she brings to the social studies program. Experiences in movement will grow through and out of mathematics. In comprehensive arts programs, whatever the legitimate and important differences among local schools and school districts, the arts will be richly represented -- on their own terms and as a vital influence on and resource for the whole curriculum.

These projected plans were discussed at a Michigan statewide conference in Lansing on April 15-16, 1975.

As we move toward the end of the century, we must be more and more aware of the rapid geometric progression of knowledge. In these years of uncertainties, we must capitalize on those techniques in education which reenforce man's humanistic goals and aspirations. No longer can any teacher present knowledge for its own sake. If we are to cope with

daily confusion and frustration, let us do so through humanistic process. Traditionally, man's art has been the cry of his soul. We must pay heed to that cry through art's techniques to the interdisciplinary teaching of life itself.

I believe that I can summarize my feelings about process best through a poem written by Dorothy Silverman called "Confusion."

I would like to quote it for you:

> They told me once
> in hollow sounds
> looking over their glasses
> through chalk covered eyes.
>
> And though I have forgotten
> what it was they said,
>
> it has made all the difference.

We all may forget the words of what they said, but "it has made all the difference." This is the humanistic feeling we search for in our CATS program. This is the process.